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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 HARARE 000070

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [PHUM](#) [ZI](#)
SUBJECT: TSVANGIRAI TELLS AMBASSADOR MDC WILL ENTER
GOVERNMENT

REF: A) HARARE 59 B) PRETORIA 165 C) HARARE 55 D)
PRETORIA 164

Classified By: Ambassador James D. McGee for reason 1.4 (d)

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai has decided the MDC should enter government and will so recommend to the MDC National Council on January 30. He expects the Council to support his recommendation. With his inauguration as prime minister scheduled for February 11, ZANU-PF negotiators will meet in the next several days to discuss allocations of governorships, composition and powers of the National Security Council, and the fate of abductees. Tsvangirai remains distrustful of Zimbabwean president Robert Mugabe, but is "cautiously optimistic" a government of national unity can work and help him obtain his objectives of "restoring basic freedoms, healing the nation, and stabilizing the economy." END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) Tsvangirai met with the Ambassador early on January 29. He returned to Zimbabwe on the evening of January 28 after meeting with Botswanan president Ian Khama earlier in the day.

The Negotiating Process

¶3. (C) Tsvangirai described the January 26 SADC Extraordinary Summit in Pretoria. SADC leaders, including Mugabe, initially met for six hours; Tsvangirai was excluded. He and Welshman Ncube, representing MDC-M, then were included in the discussion. According to Tsvangirai, there was a general consensus among the leaders, including Khama and Zambia's Banda who were the most sympathetic to the MDC, that a government should be established as soon as possible. The Summit then proceeded to examine outstanding issues

one-by-one to determine areas of agreement and disagreement, and next steps to resolve disagreements.

--Amendment 19. There was agreement among the parties as to the substance of the Amendment but disagreement as to sequencing. ZANU-PF wanted the Amendment passed immediately, while the MDC wanted all outstanding issues resolved before passage of the Amendment. With the outlines of a deal in place, the Amendment should be voted on next week.

--National Security Council. There was agreement among the parties that the Council should be controlled by the leaders in government of all parties and that legislation should be drafted to effect this. Negotiators will meet today to accomplish this. Legislation should be voted on next week.

--Provincial Governors. There was agreement among the parties that governorships should be allocated among the parties. Negotiators will meet today to determine a formula for allocation. Naming of new governors will presumably be done after the new government is formed.

--Breaches of the July 22 Memorandum of Understanding and the September 15 agreement. This refers to recent violence and abductions, and the appointments of Gideon Gono as Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe governor and Johannes Tomana as Attorney General. The parties agreed that representatives on the Joint Monitoring and Implementation Committee (JMIC) contemplated by the September 15 agreement will be named and will meet in the next several days to consider the issue of

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violence and abductions. Appointments, including ambassadors, permanent secretaries, and other high-ranking officials, will be considered after formation of the new government.

--Allocation of Ministries. Tsvangirai acknowledged to the Ambassador that reallocation of ministries had been an objective of the MDC. Nevertheless, SADC stuck to its position, set out in a November 9 communique, that ZANU-PF and MDC should share the Home Affairs ministry and that SADC would not become involved in further discussions. The issue will be reviewed by the parties six months after the formation of the new government.

¶4. (C) We asked Tsvangirai about reports circulating in MDC circles that Tsvangirai in a private meeting with Mugabe had cut a silent deal with him that was then presented to SADC. Tsvangirai categorically denied this. He said outstanding issues were discussed. Mugabe refused to make concessions and urged Tsvangirai to join government. Tsvangirai refused.
(Ref C)

The MDC Position...

¶5. (C) Noting that there had been confusion about the MDC position after the Summit concluded (Ref B), Tsvangirai said the MDC had objected to his exclusion from some of the proceedings at which Mugabe (as head of State) had been present, and to the refusal of SADC to take up the issue of allocation of ministries. These objections were reflected in an MDC press statement (Ref C) Nevertheless, Tsvangirai had told SADC that he supported the SADC position as contained in the SADC Communique (Ref D) and as outlined in Paragraph 3, supra.

¶6. (C) Tsvangirai noted he had told the SADC leaders that his agreement was subject to ratification by the MDC National Council. He told the Ambassador today he was confident the Council would support him. He noted that he would be inaugurated on February 11 and ministers sworn in on February 13. Observing that there were those in the MDC who opposed entering government without outstanding issues being

completely resolved, he averred that there were differences within the MDC based on principle. He was the leader and would set the direction; he expected a united party going forward.

¶7. (C) Tsvangirai stated he was still not happy with the allocation of ministries. But the MDC had achieved success on four of the five outstanding issues. He had agreed to the deal "for the sake of the people." The only way the MDC could save the people was by joining government. Without a government of national unity (GNU), the country could experience unpredictable changes--even anarchy. His decision was resonating well with "the people." He commented there had been a large and enthusiastic crowd to welcome him home last night from South Africa. He concluded that he was "cautiously optimistic" that a government of national unity (GNU) could work.

...and MDC Objectives

¶8. (C) Primary MDC objectives in a GNU, stated Tsvangirai, were to restore freedoms, heal the nation, and stabilize the economy. He expected early action on beginning the constitutional reform process and parliamentary reform (with MDC control of Parliament), including the repeal of draconian

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legislation such as the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) and the Public Order and Security Act (POSA). He said he would travel around the country to promote reform and facilitate humanitarian assistance.

Dealing with Mugabe--Leap of Faith

¶9. (C) The Ambassador asked Tsvangirai if he could trust Mugabe. Tsvangirai responded by rhetorically asking whether Mugabe would have trusted Ian Smith in 1980. He continued, "I don't trust him fully, but he needs me more than I need him....he's old and doesn't trust his people--they're corrupt and have lied to him." Tsvangirai added that the MDC had to give him the benefit of the doubt. If Mugabe betrayed their trust, the MDC could always leave government.

¶10. (C) Tsvangirai said he would meet with Mugabe on February 2. He outlined for us his initial agenda. He will stress the need to restore international relations and to refrain from public condemnation of his opponents. He will tell Mugabe he will not tolerate corruption. And he will discuss a work plan to include an audit of all ministries so that he can be informed about the government and understand what the MDC is inheriting.

Violence and Abductees

¶11. (C) According to Tsvangirai, the issue of violence and abductees was fundamental and had to be resolved now. The JMJC would meet in the next couple of days to discuss it. SADC was also helping. He expected a quick release of those now in custody.

Developmental Assistance and Sanctions

¶12. (C) Tsvangirai acknowledged that ZANU-PF would exert pressure on the MDC to approach the West for developmental assistance and to lift sanctions. He said decisions on these issues were matters of policy to be decided by the U.S. and others--not by the GOZ or MDC. Zimbabwe would have to earn the confidence of the world in order for positive decisions

to be made.

Gideon Gono

¶13. (C) The appointments of Gideon Gono (RBZ) and Johannes Tomana (Attorney General) were, according to Tsvangirai, breaches of the MOU and September 15 agreement. For constitutional reasons, he believed it would be impossible to remove Tomana. As for Gono, "he has to go." But Tsvangirai refused to say how or when this would occur.

Tsvangirai's Meeting with Ian Khama

¶14. (C) In his meeting with Khama yesterday, Tsvangirai said he thanked him for taking a firm position within SADC and helping to configure the debate on the Zimbabwean issue. He viewed Khama as a dynamic, young leader in contrast to the mostly old and hardened leaders of other SADC countries. He urged Khama to convince his SADC colleagues to closely monitor the implementation of the GNU.

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COMMENT

¶15. (C) The MDC decision to enter government at this time is in one sense disappointing in that escalating economic pressures, particularly the lack of forex and the inability to pay military and police salaries, and sustained international pressure were having an effect on the Mugabe regime. But there have been unfulfilled predictions for years of the imminent fall of Mugabe. Tsvangirai made a calculated decision Mugabe would cling to power and that inclusion in government offered at least the possibility of attaining MDC objectives. The absence of a good MDC Plan B no doubt contributed to this decision.

¶16. (C) We should not lose sight of how far the MDC has come in the last year. In March, for the first time in a presidential election, an opposition candidate won more votes than Mugabe. For the first time, there is a working opposition majority in Parliament and for the first time there is an opposition Speaker of Parliament. Tsvangirai will be prime minister, the first time an opposition party has held a significant position in government. The MDC will control important ministries. And Amendment 19 will circumscribe the powers of the president and set the country on a path of constitutional reform.

¶17. (C) All this said, the success of a GNU also depends on the good will of ZANU-PF and Mugabe. And good will, since the September 15 agreement, has been sorely lacking as ZANU-PF continued to engage in politically-motivated abductions and torture. We remain distrustful of Mugabe and his cohorts, and will watch in the days ahead for signs of good will and change, including the proximate release of abductees and an end to violence, ZANU-PF rhetoric, and, after the government is formed, the replacement of Gideon Gono. Finally, if ZANU-PF does permit political space, will inexperienced MDC officials be able to carry out Tsvangirai's ambitious agenda, and, after years outside government, will they be coopted by ZANU-PF and/or corrupted by the perquisites of government? END COMMENT.

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